

**REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Claims 14-19, and 21-41 remain pending in the application. Claims 15-19, and 23-41 have been withdrawn from consideration by the Examiner, leaving claims 14, 21 and 22 for consideration.

Reconsideration of the rejections and allowance of the pending application in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action claims 14, 21 and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Anjo (U.S. Patent No. 5,046,014) in view of Kamada (U.S. Patent No. 5,595,560) and Watanabe (U.S. Patent No. 5,297,022). Applicants note that Boxes 6 and 7 in the Office Action Summary (PTO-326) are unclear, and thus respectfully request that the Examiner make an appropriate correction therein.

Independent claim 14 has been amended to more clearly define a structural feature of an embodiment and to more clearly distinguish over the applied prior art reference by further reciting that the NC program is generated by selecting a maximum number of tools currently mounted. No new matter is introduced by the present amendment. In this regard, the Examiner's attention is directed to, inter alia, page 24, lines 3-4 of Applicants' application.

In the method of preparing a program for a punch press of the present embodiment, as recited in claim 14, includes, inter alia, the features wherein the punch press is provided with a punch supporting member that supports a plurality of punches, a die supporting member that supports a plurality of dies corresponding to the punches

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and a tool storage device that stores the plurality of punches and the plurality of dies, and identification media to identify each tool are attached respectively on each of the punches and each of the dies. Further, in the method, the punch press is provided with a punch identification medium reader that reads out a punch identification information from a punch identification medium attached to the punch and a die identification medium reader that reads out a die identification information from a die identification medium attached to the die. The program preparing method prepares the program by feeding a punch identification information and a die identification information from the respective identification medium readers back to an automatic programming apparatus and by allotting a punch existing on the punch supporting member and a die existing on the die supporting member to a workplace region to be processed such that a total number of replacements of punches in the punch supporting member and dies in the die supporting member is minimized. The program preparing method includes identifying punches mounted on the punch support member and dies mounted on the die support member, generating an NC program for the punch press by selecting a punch mounted on the punch support member and a die mounted on the die support member, identifying a punch and a die stored in the tool storage device and selected in generating the NC program, and generating a program for replacement of the punch and die mounted on the support members with the punch and die stored in the tool storage device and selected in generating the NC program. Furthermore, the NC program is generated by selecting a maximum number of tools currently mounted.

Applicants respectfully submits that the cited references relied upon in the rejection under 35U.S.C. 103(a) do not disclose such a combination of features, in particular, that the NC program is generated by selecting a maximum number of tools currently mounted.

Applicants note that the Anjo reference appears to disclose a general structure of a punch press. The Examiner appears to acknowledge that Anjo does not disclose the program preparing method as recited in claim 14. The Examiner, however, takes the position that Kamada teaches utilizing the information read from each of the punches and dies, both in the support members and also in a tool storage device to determine and automate the replacement schedules there, i.e., "generating an NC program (see Page 5, lines 4-8, of the Official Action). Further, the Examiner cites to Watanabe for general teachings of minimizing tool changing. However, Applicants note that Kamada does not teach or suggest a system that generates a NC program by selecting a maximum number of tools currently mounted (i.e., by selecting tools mounted as much as possible, see Page 24, lines 3-4).

Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that none of Anjo, Kamada or Watanabe teaches the above-noted combination of presently claimed features. In particular, the most KAMADA discloses in regard to mounting a new punch or die is an operator operating a bar code reader to read the bar codes of the punch and die, and the NC unit checking to determine if the shape of the punch is the same as the shape of the die. If they differ from each other, the combination is determined to be an error (see Col. 6, lines 15-25).

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Thus, even assuming, arguendo, that the teachings of Anjo, Kamada and Watanabe can be properly combined, the asserted combination of the references would not result in the invention as recited in claim 14.

Independent claim 14 is now in condition for allowance in view of the amendments and the above-noted remarks. Dependent claims 21 and 22 are also submitted to be in condition for allowance in view of their dependence from the allowable base claims and also at least based upon their recitations of additional features of the present invention. It is respectfully requested, therefore, that the rejection under 35 U.S.C.103(a) be withdrawn and that an early indication of the allowance thereof be given.

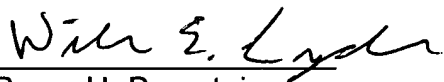
Based on the above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based on prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to be attached thereto.

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Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,  
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